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The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

At midday today, the Holy Father Francis appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Angelus with the faithful and pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square.

The following are the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Before the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

On this Second Sunday of Lent, the Gospel of the *Transfiguration* is proclaimed. Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him on the mountain and is revealed to them in all his beauty as Son of God (cf. *Mt 17:1-9*).

Let us pause a moment over this scene and ask ourselves: Of what does this beauty consist? What do the disciples see? A special effect? No, that is not it. They see the light of God's holiness shining on the face and on the clothing of Jesus, the perfect image of the Father. God's majesty, God's beauty is revealed. But God is Love. Therefore, the disciples had been beholding with their eyes *the beauty and splendour of divine Love incarnate in Christ*. They had a foretaste of paradise. What a surprise for the disciples! They had the face of Love before their very eyes for so long without ever being aware of how beautiful it was! Only now do they realize it with such joy, with immense joy.

In reality, through this experience, Jesus is forming them, preparing them for an even more important step. Soon after that, in fact, they would have to recognize the same beauty in him when he would mount the cross and his face would be *disfigured*. Peter struggles to understand: he would like to stop time, "pause" the scene, stay there and prolong this marvelous experience. But Jesus does not allow it. Indeed, his light cannot be reduced to a "magical moment"! It would thus become something false, artificial, something that would dissolve into the fog of passing sentiment. On the contrary, Christ is the light that orients our journey like the pillar of fire for the people in the wilderness (*Ex 13:21*). Jesus' beauty *does not alienate* his disciples from the reality of life, but gives them

the strength *to follow him* all the way to Jerusalem, all the way to the cross. Christ's beauty is not alienating. It always brings you forward. It does not make you hide. Go forward!

Brothers and sisters, this Gospel traces a path for us too. It teaches us how important it is to *remain with Jesus* even when it is not easy to understand everything he says and does for us. In fact, it is by staying with him that we learn to recognize on his face the luminous beauty of love he gives us, even when it bears the marks of the cross. And it is in his school that we learn to see the same beauty on the faces of the people who walk beside us every day – family, friends, colleagues who take care of us in the most varied ways. How many luminous faces, how many smiles, how many wrinkles, how many tears and scars reveal love around us! Let us learn to recognize them and to fill our hearts with them. And then let us set out in order to bring the light we have received to others as well, through concrete acts of love (cf. *1 Jn 3:18*), diving into our daily occupations more generously, loving, serving, and forgiving with greater earnestness and willingness. The contemplation of God's wonders, the contemplation of God's face, of the Lord's face, must move us to the service of others.

We can ask ourselves: Do we know how to recognize the light of God's love in our lives? Do we recognize it with joy and gratitude on the faces of the people who love us? Do we look around us for the signs of this light that fills our hearts and open them to love and service? Or do we prefer the straw fires of idols that alienate us and close us in on ourselves? The great light of the Lord and the false, artificial light of idols. Which do I prefer?

May Mary, who kept the light of her Son in her heart even in the darkness of Calvary, accompany us always on the way of love.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

These past days, my thought has been often directed to the victims of the train accident that happened in Greece. Many were young students. I am praying for the deceased. I am near the wounded and to their relatives. May Our Lady comfort them.

I now express my sorrow for the tragedy that took place in the waters of Cutro, near Crotona. I am praying for the numerous victims of the shipwreck, for their relatives and for those who survived. I manifest my appreciation and my gratitude to the local population and institutions for their solidarity and hospitality toward these our brothers and sisters. I renew my appeal to everyone so that similar tragedies may not be repeated. Let the human traffickers be stopped so they do not continue to dispose of the lives of so many innocent people! May the journeys of hope never more be transformed into journeys of death. May the clear waters of the Mediterranean never more be bloodied by such tragic accidents! May the Lord give us the strength to understand and to weep.

I greet all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims from Italy and various countries. In particular, I greet the Ukrainian community from Milano who has come on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the martyrdom of the Bishop, Saint Josaphat who gave his life for the unity of Christians. Dear brothers and sisters, I praise your efforts to welcome your compatriots who have fled from the war. May the Lord, through the intercession of Saint Josaphat, grant peace to the battered Ukrainian people.

I greet the pilgrims from Lithuania and the Lithuanian community of Rome who are celebrating Saint Casimir, as well as the Catholic Romanian community from Zaragoza (Spain), and the parish groups who have come from Murcia and Jerez de la Frontera (Spain); and from Tbilisi, Georgia.

I greet the faithful from Burkina Faso, the Confirmation candidates from Scandicci and from Anzio; the faithful from Capaci, Ostia and San Mauro Abate in Rome.

I wish all of you a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci!*
